



U.S. Department  
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# News Release

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*Washington, D.C.* -- Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) Togo D. West Jr. today announced a new development project for VAs Salisbury, N.C., National Cemetery that will meet the burial needs of area veterans for more than 50 years.

This month VA expects to complete the transfer of approximately 40 acres from the Salisbury VA Medical Center to the 13-acre national cemetery, which was projected to close by the end of this year. It is estimated the addition to the cemetery will yield some 20,000 new gravesites, providing services well beyond the year 2050. Through the initial transfer of land and subsequent development, there will be no break in burial service.

Secretary West said, "I commend the veterans community, the North Carolina Congressional delegation, the Rowan County Board of Commissioners, and the Rowan County Veteran Council, who have worked long and hard with VA to keep the rich history and tradition of the Salisbury National Cemetery alive for years to come. This development means we can continue to provide veterans and their families in the Salisbury area with burial benefits they deserve and have earned through their service in uniform to this country."

VA will work closely with the veterans community and will seek input as the planning process goes forward. VA officials met this week with Salisbury VA Medical Center engineering staff to work out the details and design for the project.

Salisbury was designated a national cemetery site in 1865.

The cemetery is historically significant and was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It includes the remains of American veterans of every war and branch of service throughout U.S. history.

During the Civil War, Salisbury was a major confederate military supply depot, housing trainloads of materials sent south from Richmond, Va. In 1863, Salisbury became a prisoner of war camp for captured Union soldiers. By late 1864, over 10,000 men crowded its six-acre compound, resulting in a staggering mortality rate. Of the 10,000, more than 5,000 died of starvation and disease.

All traces of the prison had been swept away by the end of 1868. A cemetery remained on a small hill in which the Union POWs were buried in 18 parallel trenches. Among the estimated 11,700 unknowns interred in these trenches are the remains of Robert Livingstone, a Union soldier who died in the prison camp in 1864. Livingstone was the oldest son of Dr. David Livingstone, the noted African missionary and explorer. In October 1992, the United Daughters of the Confederacy erected a plaque showing the location of the burial trenches.

Information on VA burial benefits is available from national cemetery offices and VA regional offices. For more information, call 1-800-827-1000 or visit the VA home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.va.gov> or the National Cemetery Administration home page at <http://www.cem.va.gov>. Veterans with discharges other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children are eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. VA also provides grave markers and headstones for the unmarked graves of eligible veterans even if they are not buried in a national cemetery. VA does not reserve space in national cemeteries prior to the time of need.